

The list includes hundreds of vital safety improvements along secondary roads such as widening narrow pavement, straightening curves, improving sight distances, drainage improvements and building turn lanes. Forty-four signal improvements are planned such as new closed loop systems along N.C. 58 in Carteret County, U.S. 17 in Pasquotank County and U.S. 70 in Burke County. Additionally, there are 189 bridge replacements across the state.

Easley also announced 23 highway projects in Cabarrus County for a total of \$14 million and another 23 projects in Rowan County for nearly \$11 million. "Extra emphasis was directed toward these counties to help offset some of the serious job losses and boost the local economies," he said.

NCDOT solicited candidate projects earlier in the year from local governments for consideration. To be selected, projects must fulfill vital safety and highway preservation needs, such as pavement rehabilitation, road widening and bridge replacements.

The agency plans to let \$100 million of these highway projects to contract by Dec. 30 and an additional \$170 million by March 2004. The \$70 million in public transportation projects will be announced at a later date. NCDOT will be working with the Minority Contractors Expansion Council and other outreach groups to ensure opportunities for bid participation.

According to The Road Information Program (or TRIP), 42,000 jobs are created by every \$1 billion spent in road construction, and every \$1 in highway spending has a \$5.70 impact on the economy. Based on these figures, *N.C. Moving Ahead!* will make a \$4 billion impact in North Carolina and will result in nearly 30,000 new jobs.

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